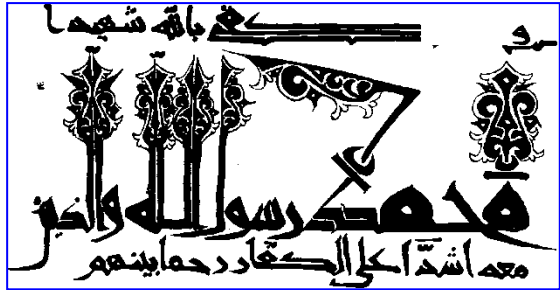


THE PROPHET'S NIGHT JOURNEY AND ASCENSION

Annemarie Schimmel

A folksong from the Indus Valley, composed in the eighteenth century, greets the Prophet dozens of times, taking up the welcome that once the angels and the blessed souls in Paradise accorded to him:



Muhammad, peace be upon him,, you traveled to
heavens high,
The angels addressed you with "Welcome!"
The inhabitants of the heavens too
Said: "Welcome, a hundred times welcome!"¹



The Prophet's mysterious night journey (*isra*) through the heavens has inspired a literature even more comprehensive than that about the miracles accompanying his birth.² Furthermore, from the viewpoint of both theologians and mystics, his ascension to heaven (*mi'raj*) is much more important in the Divine *Heilsgeschichte* than the *maulid*.³

The nucleus out of which the story of the mysterious journey grew is the statement at the beginning of Sura 17:

"Praised be He who traveled by night with His servant from the sacred mosque to the farthest sanctuary!"

The "farthest sanctuary," or rather the "farthest mosque," *al-masjid al-aqsa*", was interpreted as meaning Jerusalem:⁴ hence the present name of the AlAqsa mosque in that city.

The earliest biography of the Prophet, the *Sira* of Ibn Ishaq, tells the story thus:

One night the angel Gabriel lifts the Prophet onto a heavenly mount called Buraq; Muhammad, peace be upon him, then travels with Gabriel, and on this night journey or *isra'*, he is shown the marvels of heaven and earth en route to Jerusalem, where he meets with the former prophets and

leads them in ritual prayer'. Then, from the "farthest mosque" he begins his heavenly journey, first described as climbing a heavenly ladder, *mi'raj*.³
(Some

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commentators separate the two events-- the night journey and the ascent to heaven--but even Ibn Ishaq combines both, and since he is regarded as the most reliable biographer of the Prophet, his account is generally the basis for further elaborations.) The ascent is described as followed in his *Sira*:

A trustworthy person has reported to me from Abu Sa'id that he had heard Muhammad, peace be upon him, tell: "After I had done the necessary in Jerusalem I was brought a ladder (*mi'raj*), and I never saw a more beautiful one. It was the one upon which the dead turn their glances at the resurrection. My friend [Gabriel] made me climb until we reached one of the heavenly gates, which is called Gate of the Guard. There twelve hundred angels were acting as guardians.

Here, Isma'il asks Muhammad, peace be upon him's name and inquires whether he is indeed a true messenger.¹ After receiving a satisfactory answer, he allows Muhammad, peace be upon him, to pass through the heavens. In the lowest heaven the Prophet sees Adam, in front of whom the souls of mankind are paraded, and he is shown the punishments of the sinners, which correspond to the nature of their crimes. Those who have embezzled the money of orphans must swallow fire; usurers with terribly swollen bodies are chased by crocodiles into the fire and are trampled down; and so on, through many other, even more horrible punishments.

¹ There is no tradition that would suggest any angel called Isma'il at the gate of heaven asking Gabriel or Muhammad, peace be upon them both, and the question that the angels at the gate of the first and other heavens asked was not about the authenticity of his being prophet (peace be upon him) but if he had been called or, alternatively translated, if his time of ba'ath (prophethood) had come. The conversation between the sojourners and the gatekeepers goes like this: Gatekeeper said, Who is it?. The Angel Gabriel replied, "Gabriel." The gatekeepers say: "Who is with you?" He said, "Muhammad". "Has he been called? / or Has his time of baath come?" The Angel said, "Yes, he has been called?" Ibn Ishaq's translator (Guillaume in English) as reported by Schimmel here, seems to have mistranslated these phrases. If one were to distort the content of the message, to knowledgeable Muslims it would amount to hurling a mischief, deliberate or not.

Muhammad, peace be upon him, then visits the subsequent heavens and meets in them some of the prophets who preceded him. He sees Jesus in the fourth heaven and Abraham in the seventh. That Abraham is located in the highest possible sphere proves once more his very special position in the Islamic tradition both as the ancestor of the Arabs through Isma'il and as builder of the Kaba, and as the spiritual hero who smashed the idols.

Finally, the Prophet, peace be upon him, enters Paradise. In some redactions of the tale, he is offered on his way three cups, one with water, one with milk, and one with wine; he chooses the milk, which is interpreted as choosing the right "middle path." This brief interlude is a typical initiation rite.

According to one oft-repeated tradition, God then commands the Prophet to introduce fifty daily prayers in his community. While he descends to(wards) earth, Moses remonstrates with him, saying that his people will never be able to perform that many prayers and he should return to ask God that the number be reduced. After several repeated efforts God does finally reduce the number of required prayers to five.² When Moses says that even this is too much, Muhammad, peace be upon him, refuses to ask for any lighter duty, so the number has remained at five for the Muslim ever since.⁶ Thus the heavenly journey is shown to have a very practical purpose. But this purpose did not remain so central in later versions of the legend, which substitute other motives or supplement it with elaborations. In particular, the right of intercession by the Prophet is often seen as the chief result of his dialogue with the Lord. [161]

According to Islamic tradition the *isra'* and *mi'raj* took place during the later Meccan period of Muhammad, peace be upon him's life, not long before his Hegira to Medina. It is commemorated on 27 Rajab, the seventh lunar month. In some areas, for instance in Kashmir, the memory of the *mi'raj* used to be celebrated for a whole week with recitations and illuminations. In Turkey, the night of the *mi'raj* came to be

² The intent of the message in this situation is not translated accurately. The message in this situation can be rephrased thus: After several repeated efforts with God, the number of required prayers gets reduced to five).

treated parallel to the night of the Prophet's birth, as a *kandil*, an illuminated night, in which the mosques are decorated with lamps. Children born on this auspicious day can be called, as I know at least from Indo-Pakistani practice, Miraj, Miraj Din, Miraj Muhammad, and the like.³

No other aspect of the Prophet's life has interested orientalists and historians of religion more than the heavenly journey.⁷ It appears to be a kind of *Berufungserlebnis*, or initiatory experience, and is therefore combined in some legends with the cleansing of Muhammad, peace be upon him's heart.

Scholars have even seen in the night journey parallels to the experiences of [people in many other cultures including Siberia, Iran, India, and in Judeo-Christian tradition, as well.]

Citing the example of Siberian shamans, in this respect, Dr. Schimmel says, the seat of honor that Muhammad, peace be upon him, was accorded at the *Sidrat al-muntaha*, "the Lote Tree of the farthest limit" (Sura 53: 14) in Paradise, has reminded historians of religion of the visions of shamans who reach the world-tree in their ecstatic flights.

Speaking of the influences from Iran, Dr. Schimmel reminds her readers that such examples 'have also been postulated' in that part of the world as well. Such examples 'are found in the Middle Persian *Arda Viraf Namak*', Dr. Schimmel also mentions 'Indian parallels' (as possible prototypes or at least as analogous religious phenomena.) Furthermore, she also brings out comparisons with Jewish and Christian apocalyptic visions as having been presented as particularly appealing parallels.⁸

It is said that at Muhammad, peace be upon him's return his bed was still warm and that the pitcher of water, which had tumbled over when he was carried away, had not yet leaked out completely.⁹ Thus the heavenly journey became a model of the ecstatic state in which man can live in a single moment through years.

³ A male child born in this month can also be called Rajab as well. (Other months of Islamic calendar lending names to male children can be Moharram, Safar, Rabee'a, Sha'baan, and Ramdhan.

Thus the heavenly journey became a model of the ecstatic state in which man can live in a single moment through years, nay, centuries and millennia; for the *nunc aeternum* with which the mystic's soul comes in touch during such an experience is beyond created, serial time. It is the *waqt*, the moment, or, as German medieval mystics would say, *das Nu*, that the Prophet experienced during his flight.

In order to explain this experience of complete timelessness to doubting spirits present in every community, apologists like to use the old Indian tale of the man who, submerged in water, lives in a few instants through a whole lifetime a story that has been used in India to exemplify the play of *maya*, illusion, and has been taken over into the Near Eastern and even European traditions.¹⁰

Islamic theologians have devoted much speculation to the heavenly journey, for it presents some difficulties to solve.

First of all it had to be clarified whether Muhammad, peace be upon him, made this journey in the body or in the spirit. The remark of his wife 'Ai'sha that "his body was not missed" was countered [162] by an increasing tendency to claim that the journey had indeed been a physical one. Certainly, the Mu'tazilite school considered the whole event a vision and admitted only of the possibility of a spiritual journey,¹¹ while the "orthodox," for example the leading Muslim commentator of the Koran, Tabari (early tenth century), were of the opinion that the Prophet's journey indeed took place in the body, for they were more literally inclined, and the Koran, as Tabari stresses, clearly states that God "traveled with His servant at night" and not "with His servant's spirit." And why would the Prophet, peace be upon him, have needed a mount like Buraq for a purely spiritual, visionary journey? ¹² The modernists, again, have regarded the *mi'raj* as a vision.¹³ At least one scholar in the modern West has drawn a parallel to an ecstatic experience familiar to and accepted by Christians: he reminds us that Paul speaks in 2 Corinthians 12: 1 - 10 of a seemingly similar event.

"I know a man . . . , whether in the body, or out of the body I know not, was caught up even to the third heaven ... was

caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for man to utter.”

Perplexed though he was about the nature of his own experience, "with Paul this is the record of indubitably mystical experience, which was the occasion and ground of an unyielding assurance."

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Later literature, especially popular poetry, contains numerous tales that tell how terribly those were punished who denied Muhammad, peace be upon him's bodily journey to heaven. For according to one widespread theory, which is particularly common among the Sufis, the Prophet's pure body could reach an immediate proximity to God that the normal believer, nay, even the greatest saint, can reach only in the spirit. The highest grace granted to a human being is thus that his spirit may attain the same purity as the Prophet's body: only then will he be able to perform a spiritual journey to draw closer to the Divine Presence.

This point became an important argument in discussions whether the Prophet or the saint occupies a loftier place in the spiritual hierarchy: it is the heavenly journey in the body-- a body that is "spirit embodied," as the Turkish poet Khaqani sings-- that once and for all proves the unique position of the Prophet, peace be upon him.

Another controversial question was whether Muhammad, peace be upon him, had really seen the Lord, and if so, whether with his eyes or with his heart.

This problem was discussed particularly in connection with the interpretation of Sura 53, *An-Najm*, "The Star." This Sura describes in its first part [first 18 verses] a vision of the Prophet, peace be upon him, who "saw him on the highest horizon." One can take the "him" to refer to Gabriel, the bringer of the revelation, and thus understand the whole sura as an account of the Prophet's vision during a revelation; but as "Him" it has also been interpreted as pertaining to God.¹⁵ (Sahal At-Tustari) That is the case [163] when Sura 53, as later often happened, is interpreted as describing the heavenly journey.

- "Some said: He saw Gabriel at the highest horizon;
- others say he saw Allah with his heart and his inner view;
- still others say, he saw Him with his eyes;
- but all of them speak the truth for they only tell what they

have heard."16 (Qastalani)

Those who regarded Sura 53 as an account of Muhammad, peace be upon him's vision during the heavenly journey-- and these were above all the mystics--point then to verse 17, "The eye did not rove." To them that means that even during the immediate vision of the Divine Essence, Muhammad, peace be upon him, did not turn away his eyes.

I closed my eye tightly from both
worlds

That is it that I learned from Mustafa:
The mystery of *ma zaagha* [it did not swerve] and *ma tagha* [it
did not turn away]-

Where but from him could I learn it? 17 (Rumi, Divan)

Thus says Rumi in words that are echoed time and again in later poetry. Nobody can imagine how close the Prophet was to the one he saw: *qaaba qausain au adna*, "two bows or closer" (Sura 53:9). This term has some times been explained as pertaining not to the length of two bows but rather to the fine juncture where the two halves of a bow are glued together; it is almost invisible and yet constitutes a distinct line of separation. So close did the Prophet come to his Lord.

It is a proof of Muhammad, peace be upon him's superiority over all other prophets that in this extreme proximity "his eye neither swerved nor was turned away." Did not Moses faint when the Divine attributes were merely manifested to him through the Burning Bush? And he had heard only the Lord's voice and had been told "You will never behold Me!" (Sura 7:139), whereas Muhammad, peace be upon him, without moving and turning away his eye, had experienced the vision of GOD.¹⁸ "The lord of *qaaba qausain*" has therefore been praised by poets in most daring hyperboles. Perhaps the most succinct description of the event was given by an Indo-Persian poet of the late fifteenth century, Jamali Kanboh, who sums up this mystery within a famous couplet:

Moses went out of his mind by a single revelation of the
Attributes

You see the Essence of the Essence, and still smile! 19
(Ikram, Armaghaan)

Not only the Sufis-- as early as Hujwiri²⁰ (Kashafal Mahjub)-
- but also the orthodox theologians, including especially the
Hanbalites, utilized the same argument from Sura 53 to prove
Muhammad, peace be upon him's superior position. They also
used it to prove that the highest level of religious life is not
mystical annihilation (as with Moses, who swooned) but rather
the sober attitude of the Prophet, peace be upon him, who
experienced God's presence in full consciousness.²¹ [164]

According to one tradition, Muhammad, peace be upon him,
claimed to have seen his Lord "in the most beautiful shape" 22
or, in a later version, as a beautiful unbearded youth wearing his
cap awry 23- a *Hadith* that the majority of Muslims of course
refuted vehemently, though it gave certain groups of Sufis a
justification for their admiration of "unbearded" youths.

Other interpreters, particularly among the later mystics, see in
the heavenly journey the true consecration of the Prophet, peace
be upon him) because they relate the word *istawa*, "he stood
upright," in Sura 53:6 not to the one whom Muhammad, peace
be upon him, saw but rather to the Prophet himself. Likewise the
phrase "he came closer and descended" (53:8) was taken to
mean Muhammad, peace be upon him, who after the initiation
came down again to his beloved community to look after them.

This interpretation fits well with later descriptions of the ideal
religious path as exemplified by the Prophet: he is ready to take
upon himself the descent into the world after experiencing the
Divine Presence in order to preach what he has learned there.
Animated and sanctified by his inexplicable, face-to-face
dialogue with God, he will try to change the conditions of the
world (even though, as some traditions have it, he also suffered
under the burden of this duty).²⁴

Muslim theologians and Western historians of religion would
agree that in this interpretation of the *mi'raj* the basic difference
between the mystical and prophetic types of religion is indeed
well expressed; a difference so succinctly summed up by
Muhammad Iqbal in the beginning of the fifth chapter of his
Lectures on the Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam,
where he quotes the saying of the Indian Sufi 'Abdul Quddus
Gangohi:

"Muhammad, peace be upon him, of Arabia ascended to the
highest heaven and returned. I swear by God, had I been in his

place, I would not have come back." 25

These words point unambiguously to the different attitudes of mystic and prophet toward the experience of the Divine, and its consequences for one's relation to the world and its inhabitants. But even a number of Muslim mystics, such as Ibn al-Farid, interpreted the night journey as "the third stage of Oneness in which the mystic returns from the 'intoxication of union' to 'the sobriety of union,' 26 (Ibn al-Farid) which exactly corresponds to the "prophetic" way back, as Iqbal explains it, in the succession of earlier thinkers.

Furthermore, Islamic modernists (and again particularly Iqbal), when discussing the heavenly journey, have pointed out that Muhammad, peace be upon him, was able to speak to God in a true I-and-Thou relationship. This seemed to Iqbal a very important corrective of the widespread doctrine of the Unity of Being: the legend of the heavenly journey confirms that God is not a mute, remote *prima causa* but indeed a personal power who can be addressed, and thus proves that there is the possibility of a fruitful person-to-person dialogue between Creator and creature, a dialogue in prayer, out of which true religious activity can grow. [165]

Connected with this person-to-person encounter is another aspect of the heavenly journey that has been frequently discussed: the interpretation of the word '*abduhu*' at the beginning of Sura 17. It is stated there that God had traveled by night with '*abduhu*', "His servant." This led many exegetes to conclude that because it is used in the Koran to designate the Prophet, peace be upon him, during his supreme religious experience, '*abduhu*' must indeed be the highest possible and most honorific attribute to be given to a human being. This is all the more logical as the same word '*abduhu*' is used in Sura 53:10, to mean either the act of revelation or the Divine address to the Prophet at the culmination of his heavenly journey. A remarkably large literature developed out of this concept of '*abduhu*'; it was discussed in the eleventh century in the *Risala* of the mystical writer Qushairi, 27 which remained one of the most widely read manuals of Sufism for centuries, and it has been given a central place in this century in Muhammad Iqbal's anthropology and prophetology (see chapter 12 in Annemarie Schimmel's "And Muhammad Is His Messenger"). At the same

time, the emphasis on *'abduhu* served to remind Muslims that Muhammad, peace be upon him, remained a created being even during his highest mystical experience, however much God had glorified him and exalted him among all creatures.

But the mystics in the tradition of Ibn 'Arabi have often repeated the idea that there cannot be a real *mi'raj* in the spatial sense, for God is omnipresent. "God spoke: 'How could My servant travel to Me? I am always with him!'" 28 This truly mystical interpretation of the *mi'raj* has found its most poignant expression in a quatrain by the much maligned Persian Sufi Sarmad, who was executed for heresy in Delhi in 1661.

The mullah says that Ahmad went to heaven

Sarmad says that heaven descended into
Ahmad! 29

At least as important as the elaborate discussion about and various interpretations of the heavenly journey by theologians and mystical teachers is the role the *mi'raj* plays in Islamic art and poetry. The poets, especially in the Persian and Persianate areas, have depicted this mysterious event through increasingly fantastic and grandiose images, using all their imagination to vie with one another in fanciful descriptions of the Prophet's journey through the spheres. Most of the great epic poems in Persian include, after the praise of God and a eulogy for the Prophet, long descriptions of the heavenly journey, in which every conceivable rhetorical device is used to give the reader at least a faint idea of this unique event. The story was embellished with ever more charming details, such as the growing of the rose from Muhammad, peace be upon him's perspiration that fell to earth during his nocturnal flight. And the poets tried to express the paradox that the Sun of Existence had risen heavenwards *at night*. 30 (Qastalani)

In the regional languages of Indo-Pakistan, for instance in Panjabi, long [166] *siharfis*, "Golden Alphabets,"⁴ are devoted to the mystery of the *mi'raj* and also to the punishment of those who deny that miracle.³¹ Among the Persian mystics

⁴ Si-harfis, means a poem of thirty-alphabets, nothing to do with Golden Alphabets.

'Attar is particularly expressive when depicting the heavenly journey in novel images. The introduction of his *llahinama* (available to nonspecialists in John A. Boyle's English translation) gives a good idea of the boundless flood of colors that he used to depict the Prophet's journey through the spheres. When reading his and related poems one has to keep in mind that an important motif of the early tradition is gradually disappearing, that is, the ladder; the whole journey is now made on Buraq.

Helmut Ritter's edition of the Persian text of the *llahinama* presents a version of the introduction that is simpler than the one used by Boyle, but it contains important elements of mystical prophetology; it does not mention the reduction of fifty ritual prayers to five, but rather combines the heavenly journey with Muhammad, peace be upon him's role as the intercessor for his community, a development that seems to have set in rather early. Here is what 'Attar sings:

At night came Gabriel, and filled with joy
He called: "Wake up, you leader of the
world!
Get up, leave this dark place and travel
now
To the eternal kingdom of the Lord!
Direct your foot to 'Where there is no
place'
And knock there at the sanctuary's
door.
The world is all excited for your sake,
The Cherubs are tonight your lowly slaves,
And messengers and prophets stand in rows
To see your beauty in this blessed night.
The gates of Paradise and skies are open-
To look at you, fills many hearts with joy!
You ask from Him tonight what you intend,
For without doubt you will behold the
Lord!"
Buraq was now brought near, as lightning
swift--
God had created him [i.e.Buraq] from His
pure light [i.e. Burq],

From head to toe enlivened by God's light-
 And from the wind he learned swiftness and
 speed.
 The Prophet mounted him in time and space;
 He left this place for "Where there is no
 place."
 There rose a tumult in the greatest Throne:
 "Here comes the first, the full moon of the
 worlds!"
 The angels stood with trays to scatter coins
 For him, whom they all loved with heart and
 soul.
 He saw the prophets on his road [path] in
 line
 To tell him of the mysteries divine ... 32 (Attar, Ilahinama),

[167] Beginning with Adam, the Prophet, peace be upon him, is now introduced by all messengers of God into the mysteries of God's beauty and majesty, for every prophet experiences the Divine Essence in a different way; Muhammad, peace be upon him, alone is granted knowledge of It in Its fullness.

When Jesus saw him, lofty and sublime,
 He made him then unique in Poverty.
 Then, when he felt the nearness of the
 Friend,
 He went to see the presence of the
 Friend.
 When Ahmad ran beyond the Sidra-tree,
 To find the essence of the Highest Friend,
 His faithful guide, this mighty Gabriel,
 Whose one wing covers all from sky to
 earth,
 Stayed there behind; but Mustafa went
 on,
 Soon drawing closer to the Royal Hall.
 The prince turned now to Gabriel and asked:
 "Why do you stay behind? Come with me
 now!"
 He answered: "O, my King of mysteries,

I cannot farther go, cannot proceed!
You, ruler of the world, must go ahead
My way ends here, and more is not
allowed:
Should I proceed a hair's breadth in my
flight,
My wings would burn in God's consuming
light!
But you must go toward the Friend
Supreme,
For it befits to you to be so close!"

Thus went the lord and left him there
behind,
Cut off his heart from ev'rything but
God.
He went so fast that when he looked
again,
The mighty Gabriel looked like a wren.
Proceeding farther he left this behind
And looked into the veils of the Unseen.

He saw no place, direction, reason,
thought,
No Throne nor floor and not the dusty
earth:
He saw the Non-Place [laa makaan]
without soul and eye.
He, in bewilderment, was hidden there:
When he perceived the end in the
beginning,
He heard a call, a message from the
Friend.
A call came from the Essence of the
All:
"Leave soul and body, transitory
one!
You, O My goal and purpose, enter
now
And see My Essence face to face, My

friend!"
In awe, he lost his speech and lost
himself-

Muhammad (peace be upon him), did not know Muhammad,
here,
Saw not himself- he saw the Soul of Souls,
The Face of Him who made the universe!

The poet goes on to depict in more detail the Prophet's state of
total bewilderment and depersonalization; but then God once
more graces Muhammad, peace be upon him, with His address
and finally tells him:

"You are My goal and purpose in
creation

And what you wish, request it, seeing
eye!" Muhammad, peace be upon him,
said: "Omniscient without How, You
inward secret, outward mystery-
You know my innermost and dearest wish:
I ask you now for my
community!
Sinful is my community, but,
sure,
They are aware of You, Your boundless
grace.
They know the ocean of Your love and
grace
How would it be if You forgave them
all?"

Once more he was addressed by God Most High:
"I have forgiven altogether, friend:
You need not worry for your people, for
My boundless grace is greater than their sins."

And after the intercession for the Muslim community has thus
been accepted, the Lord initiates the Prophet, whom He
addresses as "unique among the creatures" and "seeing eye of

all" into three times thirty thousand mysteries.³³

‘Attar then speaks of the real mystery of the heavenly journey and finally ends with a prayer addressed to him who was thus distinguished among the prophets, that is, to the Prophet of Islam, in whom he trusts and whom he loves.

In ‘Attar's description the role of Gabriel is of special importance.

A *Hadith* of which the mystics were very fond alludes to the archangel's situation: he has to stay back at the *Sidrat al-muntaha*, "the Lote Tree of the farthest limit" (Sura 53: 14),³⁴ "like a nightingale separated from his rose" (so the Turkish poet Ghanizade in his *Mi'rajiyya*)³⁵

Whatever Gabriel's greatness, Muhammad, peace be upon him's was of a special order. According to legend, the Prophet had once requested to see the archangel, who usually appeared as a handsome friend, in his true form; ³⁶ the reality was so awe-inspiring and terrible that Muhammad, peace be upon him, fainted. Still, even this mighty angel, whose one wing fills the space between heaven and earth, has no access to the Divine Presence; as Yunus Emre sings in unison with all great mystics,

For lovers even Gabriel is a veil. 37 [169]

In the famous *Hadith* connected with this mystery the Prophet said, *Li ma'a Allah waqt ...* "I have a time with God to which even Gabriel, who is pure spirit, is not admitted."³⁸ This remark is interpreted as pertaining to the mystery of the heavenly journey, in which the Prophet was taken out of serial, created time and touched the Eternal Now of God. The term *waqt*, "time," then, became a central concept in Sufi life: the Sufi is called to give himself over completely to this Divine moment, to be *ibnu'l-waqt*, "son of the moment," that is, to live in the moment of Divine inspiration. Even more, the *Hadith* about *waqt* also relates to the experience of prayer. After his return from heaven, the Prophet used to call his Ethiopian muezzin Bilal, "O Bilal, quicken us with the call to prayer!³⁹ whenever he longed to return into the Divine presence and leave time and space. For it is in prayer that man can feel this immediate

relation with God. Ritual prayer is, therefore, as the Prophet once said, a heavenly journey.

Maulana Rumi formulated this secret of prayer in a famous reply to a question posed by one of his disciples:

Formal prayer has an end, but the prayer of the soul is unlimited. It is the drowning and unconsciousness of the soul so that all these forms remain without. At that time there is no room even for Gabriel who is pure spirit. 40

Drawing on the same tradition, Rumi in his *Mathnawi* used Gabriel as the symbol of intellect, which can lead man all the way to the door of the Beloved, but is not admitted within to experience loving union: intellect has to stop at the threshold of love, for, like Gabriel, it has to fear lest the consuming Divine light burn its wings.⁴¹

Numerous embellishments accrued to the basic story of the *miraj*, especially in Sufi circles.

A delightful legend from Balochistan goes even farther than the tradition just mentioned and accords the great medieval Sufi 'Abdul Qadir Gilani a place superior to Gabriel. It is said that when Muhammad, peace be upon him, wanted to alight from his heavenly mount Buraq to enter the secret chamber of God's presence, Gabriel had already withdrawn. But 'Abdul Qadir stepped forth: he, the future founder of the most widespread mystical fraternity in the Islamic world [Silsalaye Qaadriyya], offered the Prophet his neck that he might step on it to alight without discomfort.

Out of gratitude, Muhammad, peace be upon him, granted the future saint a very special rank: when he would appear on earth some five centuries later his foot would be "on the neck of every saint.⁴² Thus 'Abdul Qadir's famous claim to precedence, "My foot is on the neck of every saint," which was heard by all saints of his age, is charmingly connected with his presence at a crucial point of Muhammad, peace be upon him's heavenly journey.

The Mevlevi tradition does not lag behind in inventiveness. [170] According to the *Manaqib al-'arifin*, the Prophet saw a wonderful effigy (*timthal*) at the Divine Throne; it was the portrait of Jalaluddin Rumi. ⁴³ And it is not at all surprising that in some Shi'a traditions, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib accompanies the Prophet into the Divine Presence.

The *mi'raj* never ceased fascinating the poets, even the nonmystical ones. Nizami, 'Attar's senior compatriot, offered in his romantic epics some most artistic descriptions of the heavenly journey, and in the course of time every detail, the colors of the sky, the garments of the angels that surrounded the Prophet and flew before him, the luminous clouds and the reactions of the seven planets, were elaborated with ever-increasing love and imaginative power. Iqbal's great epics contain a whole set of such poems, represented perhaps most beautifully in *Yusuf and Zulaikha*, where he sings of the blessed night in which wolf and lamb, sheep and lion, lie peacefully together and Gabriel, swifter than a green peacock, brings Muhammad, peace be upon him, the lovely Buraq. Iqbal (following Nizami)⁴⁴ loves to recount the reactions of the different spheres and planets that the Prophet traverses; he describes the fourth sphere, for instance, as bringing the Prophet a ewer of water with which to wash his feet, while Mercury and Venus join in serving him, and melancholy Saturn is consoled by the lovely sight of the Sun of Existence.⁴⁵

Later poets all over the Islamic world, especially in the Persianate tradition, elaborated on the examples set by Nizami, 'Attar, and Iqbal, and whether one reads Sayyid Bulaqi or Nusrati in seventeenth-century Bijapur, or, to mention a particularly fine example, their contemporary in Turkey, Ghanizade, one always meets with surprising, fanciful descriptions. Thus the idea that the Prophet's sandals touched the Divine Throne and that "the dust of his road [path] was the crown for the Throne" is repeated over and over again.⁴⁷

Ghanizade's *Mi'rajiyye* from seventeenth-century Turkey seems to me an outstanding example of this art, surpassing most other descriptions of the heavenly journey in baroque images.⁴⁸ The poet describes the blessed night in which "the darkness was black sable," and then sings of the innumerable miracles of the Prophet until he admonishes himself to come at last to the theme proper of his poem, the heavenly journey. Here, it is especially the description of Buraq, a quadruped larger than a donkey but smaller than a horse, that is very attractive. The poets have always loved to describe this creature, which was created from light, had a woman's head and a peacock's tail, and swiftly carried the Prophet through the galaxies of angels, all of whom greeted him full of admiration.

The heavenly messenger came to the holy Prophet in that night,

He brought a Buraq, fast like lightning and sky-traversing,

[171] It was a strange mount, trotting speedily, running about now on earth and now on the heavenly Throne.

In the earthly realm a hastening gazelle, in the heavens a swiftly flying phoenix.

Its body, roses; its hair, hyacinth; imperial its tail, that delightful tail; Its ear a lily's petal; its reddish eye a shimmering narcissus ...

While the Prophet flies through the spheres, everything in the cosmos is happy to serve him:

Mercury wrote the order of that prince on the tablet of the sky:

For him the night was letters; the stars, blotting sand; and the moon's

forehead the imperial handsign (*tughra*) ...

Then Gabriel must remain behind near the Lote tree, and Buraq itself is exchanged for a mysterious vehicle called *rafrac* (cf. Sura 55:76, where it is said to mean a kind of heavenly cushion), 49 and finally even the *rafrac* (here perhaps a green cloud) remains behind "like a leaf, separated from the fresh fruit in the fall." Now, Muhammad, peace be upon him, moves on alone into the Divine Presence, experiencing what the mystics in the Plotinian tradition used to call "the flight of the one to the One."

Buraq looms large in the whole process and becomes so prominent in these poems that the central object of the earlier versions, the heavenly ladder or *mi'raj*, seems completely forgotten, even though it continues to lend its name to the whole experience. 50

Not only did the poets love the scene of this heavenly journey that gave them the opportunity to display all their rhetorical skills to glorify the Prophet, the miniaturists of Iran and the countries under its cultural influence also devoted their most beautiful painting to the *mi'raj*. The superbly illustrated Uyghur manuscript of the *Mi'rajnama* from the Timurid court in Herat,

now preserved in Paris, belongs among the first examples of this genre, which began to develop in the late fourteenth century. 51. This *Mi'rajnama* (available in a fine facsimile edition) gives a lively account of all the stages and stations that the Prophet passed on his journey. In most other cases, only his passage through the starry skies is painted and, as the Sindhi folksong says:

Gabriel before him afoot,
the bridegroom riding on horseback. 52

One sees the Prophet, peace be upon him, in these miniatures, his face veiled, surrounded by multicolored clouds, flying on Buraq through the night sky; in modern times he is sometimes symbolized by a graceful white cloud or a rose on Buraq's back. Angels in precious garments surround him, carry incense before him, and accompany [172] him, as befits a prince, in pomp and circumstance to the gate of the Divine Presence. Anyone who has seen Sultan Muhammad's painting of the heavenly journey, in the Nizami manuscript now in the British Library, knows that poets and painters were equally inspired by the Prophet's ecstatic experience to create deeply religious masterpieces. 53

The Prophet's heavenly journey was a favorite subject of popular poetry too, for folk poets enjoy telling stories about miraculous events in which the Prophet's glory can be described in highly colorful terms. 54 Typical of this genre is a poem by Yunus Emre, composed around 1300 in Anatolia (close parallels can be found in the folk poetry of Indo-Pakistani Muslims as well):

God sent out Gabriel and said:
"My Muhammad, [peace be upon him], shall come!" He said:
"Take the Buraq, draw it to him-
My Muhammad shall mount!" He said.

"He shall go to Medina first,
In front of him shall angels
fly,
Open the gates of Paradise-
Enter, my Muhammad!" He said.

"My Muhammad, [peace be upon him], shall come, shall come, He shall see and look at My Throne



Shall pluck the rose of Paradise-

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And all the angels in green robes-
My Muhammad shall see!" He said.⁵⁵

Such poems correspond to the simple paintings of the *mi'raj* found in Indian or Turkish manuscripts but even more to those that nowadays adorn freight and tanker trucks in Afghanistan and Pakistan: one can find on them a more or less elegant Buraq in full bridal attire, sometimes even with the bride's nosering, the hooves gracefully crossed, all painted with great care and love. One can be sure that this sacred creature will protect the vehicle, leading it along rugged Pakistani roads [path]s, as it once had carried swiftly and carefully the beloved Prophet through the galaxies.

As the image of Buraq has become an amulet or talisman for simple truck drivers in the mountainous areas of Pakistan, or for visitors to the major shrines of saints in the Indian subcontinent, so too was the heavenly journey of the Prophet understood from early centuries onward as a paradigm for the spiritual experience of the mystics.

Since the ninth century the Sufis have [173] been wont to describe their own ecstatic transports as a journey through the heavens, because-- as we saw earlier-- they experience in the spirit what the Prophet had experienced in the body.

Bayezid Bistami, the lonely mystic of northern Iran, whose visionary account of his flight through heavenly realms belongs

to the earliest "paradoxes of the Sufis," was apparently the first to utilize this symbolism. 56 As Shams-i Tabrizi said:

"To follow Muhammad, peace be upon him, is, that he went to the *mi'raj*, and you go behind him.⁵⁷

From Avicenna and Suhrawardi the *shaikh al-ishraq* to Ibn 'Arabi, mystical visions, which led the seeker's soul into the Presence of the Divine, were described in the terminology of the *mi'raj*. 58 Remembering at least subconsciously-- that the *mi'raj* is a kind of initiation experience, the Bektashis in Turkey until recently used that term as the name of the day on which a new member of the order "took his share," that is, was initiated into the order, and would felicitate him with the words *Miradn kutlu alsun!* "May your *mi'raj* be blessed!"⁵⁹

In high mystical poetry, then, Buraq sometimes becomes an equivalent of Love, the Divine Love that, as Rumi repeatedly sings, can bring man in the twinkling of an eye into the Divine Presence while intellect lags far behind in the dust like a lame donkey.⁶⁰ It is quite possible that the Persian word *nardaban*, "ladder," which occurs so frequently in the mystical verse of Sana'i and, following him, Rumi, was intended to be an allusion to the heavenly *mi'raj* that the Prophet, peace be upon him, ascended, for it is generally used to describe the mystic's journey to "the roof of the Beloved." And Rumi calls *sama'*, the mystical dance, "a ladder that leads higher than the seventh sphere," for in *sama'*, the mystic can reach the unitive experience, the "time with God." ⁶¹

While enjoying the mystical and poetical renderings of the *mi'raj* one has to keep in mind that the story of Muhammad's heavenly journey has also exerted a considerable influence on other cultures. When looking at the miniatures in the Uyghur *Mi'rajnama* manuscript in Paris, so many of whose images are devoted to the Prophet's visions of Heaven and even more of Hell, one cannot help feeling that one has here to do with illustrations of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Indeed, several decades ago Miguel Asfn Palacios discovered possible Islamic influences from the *mi'raj* stories on Dante's visions.⁶²

These first studies caused quite a sensation in Europe, and somewhat later, Enrico Cerulli was able to prove that Arabic books about the heavenly ladder, *Kitab al-mi'raj*, and the

Prophet's ascension were not unknown in the Mediterranean world during the Middle Ages; in fact, they were apparently well enough known to influence some of Dante's descriptions of the Otherworld.⁶³ How ironic that the hero of the true *mi'raj*, the Prophet Muhammad, should have been placed by Dante among the schismatics in the lowest part of Hell!

In the history of Islamic literatures the motif of the journey through Heaven and Hell was also used outside the mystical tradition. One immediately thinks, for example, of satirical works like Abu'l- 'Ala' al-Ma'arri's (d. 1057) *Risalat al-ghufran*, which can be classified as a very witty parody of a journey through the otherworldly realms.⁶⁴ In this work the author displays a breathtaking knowledge, especially of philology, but also other kinds of scholarship, and the whole is studded with innumerable ingenious puns, apt comparisons, and delightfully malicious observations. This complicated but highly enjoyable masterpiece from the eleventh century found a rather dull echo in an Arabic poem published in 1931 Jamil Sidqi azZahawi's "Rebellion in Hell," which takes up the satirical approach of Ma'arri to explain in the end the whole experience as a bad dream, caused by indigestion.⁶⁵ A year later, Muhammad Iqbal published in Lahore his Persian *Javidnama* (The Book of Eternity), in which the motif of the journey through the heavens receives a modern philosophical content.

Guided by Maulana Rumi, whom he invokes in the beginning and who, as it were, assumes the role of Gabriel in the classical *mi'raj*, and of Virgil in the *Divine Comedy*, the poet discusses political, social, and religious problems with prominent inhabitants of the different spheres. In the end, he stands all alone in the Divine Presence, which is "growing without diminishing."⁶⁶

Of course, an orthodox Muslim who is aware of modern technical achievements may look at the heavenly journey from a different angle. In 1978 at the University of Peshawar I heard a noted theologian draw the conclusion that man's landing on the moon was a stringent proof for the reality of the Prophet's heavenly journey.⁶⁷

Endnotes to 'And Muhammad Is His Messenger'-- Chapter Nine

1. Baloch, *Maulud*, p. 10, no. 18 ('Abdur Ra'uf Bhatti).
2. Horovitz, "Mi'raj"; for the literature on the subject see Hamadeh, "Muhammad, peace be upon him, the Prophet," nos. 1145-80, to which quite a few articles can be added.
3. Thus the sixteenth-century Egyptian mystical writer Najmuddin al-Ghaiti elaborated the story of the *mi'raj* in his *Kitiib al-isra' wa'l-mi'raj*, which has largely influenced the Swahili versions of the legend. See Knappert, *Swahili Islamic Poetry*, 3:241. Ghaiti's work is translated in Jeffery, *Reader on Islam*, pp. 621 ff.; Waugh, in his article "Following the Beloved," largely relies on Jeffery's translation. For a traditionalist account see 'Abdul Haqq Dihlawi, *Madarij an-nubuwwa*, 1:179-98.
4. Guillaume, "Where Was al-masjid al-aqsa?"
5. Andrae, *Die person Muhammad, peace be upon him*, s, pp. 41 ff., citing Ibn Hisham, *Sira*, I.200 [page 298] notes to pages 160-62] ff. McKane, "A Manuscript on the mi'rrij in the Bodleian," speaks of an Arabic version of the mi'rrij legend with some unusual features; the unknown author, who emphasizes the element of light, seems to rely on Sufi sources.
6. Bukhari, *Sahih*, 8:1:1.
7. See Affifi, "The Story of the Prophet's Ascent (*mi'raj*) in Sufi Thought and Literature"; Azma, "Some Notes on the Impact of the Story of the *mi'rrij* on Sufi Literature"; Bevan, "Muhammad, peace be upon him, 's Ascension to Heaven"; Blochet, "Etudes sur l'histoire religieuse de l'Iran, II"; Hartmann, "Die Himmelsreise Muhammad, peace be upon him, s und ihre Bedeutung in der Religion des Islam"; Horovitz, "Muhammad, peace be upon him, s Himmelfahrt"; Schrieke, "Die Himmelsreise Muhammad, peace be upon him, s"; Porter, "Muhammad, peace be upon him, 's Journey to Heaven"; Waugh, "Following the Beloved"; Widengren, *Muhammad, peace be upon him, : The Apostle and His Ascension*. Archer, *Mystical Elements in Muhammad, peace be upon him*, discusses the subject rather extensively. As early as 1785, one J.

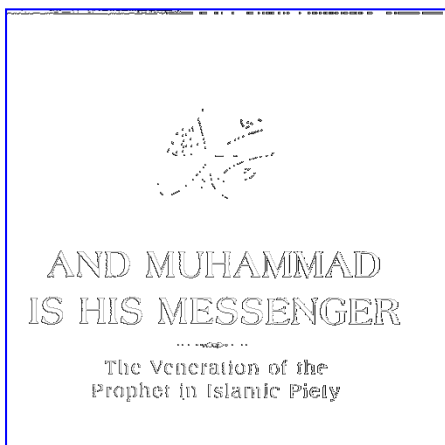
- Morder published in Frankfurt a "Fragment" under the title "Mohammeds Reise ins Paradies." As it was not unusual in the late nineteenth century to regard Muhammad, peace be upon him, as an epileptic, one even finds an attempt to explain the *mi'raj* as a true experience of an epileptic. Dostoevski writes: "All you clever fools are convinced that he was simply a liar and impostor. But no! He really was in Paradise in the fit of epilepsy, which he suffered from, like I do. I don't know whether that bliss lasts for seconds, or hours, or months, but believe me, I wouldn't take all the joys that life can offer for it." Futrell, "Dostoyevsky and Islam," p. 22.
8. Cf. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, pp. 44 ff. The *merkabah* mysticism offers interesting parallels with the *mi'raj* legend, for instance, the wayfarer's examination at the gate; the "staying upright"; the idea that the angels, contrary to the perfected seeker, are not allowed into the Divine Presence; and the symbolism of the Divine Throne, which appears so prominently in poetical descriptions of the *mi'riij*, especially in the Persianate tradition.
 9. Baihaqi, *Dalii'i! an-nubuwwa*, p. 118.
 10. Zimmer, *Maya*, pp. 27 ff. The story was applied to one Shaikh Shihabuddin, in Petis de la Croix, *Mille et unjours* (Paris 1710-12); it has been used by Amir Khusrau of Delhi in the *Ayina-i Iskandari*, and in Egypt folk tradition claims that Shaikh i\bdul Qadir ad-Dashtuti (d. 1523) convinced the doubting Mamluk sultan of the reality of the *mi'riij* by immersing his head in a bowl of water (Kriss and Kriss-Heinrich, *Volks Glaube im Bereich des Islam*, 1:78). In Sindhi folktales, it forms the subject of the story of Eflatun the Magician; see Schimmel, *Mrchen aus Pakistan*, pp. 133-39. It has also appeared in the German poetical tradition in Agnes Miegel's ballad "Die Mar vom Ritter Manuel."
 11. Gatje, *Koran und Koranexegese*, pp. 105-8, citing Zamakhshari's commentary on Sura 17:1.
 12. Tabari, *Tafsir* on Sura 17:1. The Turkish critic Isik, "Shocking Writings," pp. 36-37, and his South African commentators violently attack

Hamidullah's remark that "the *mi'raj* is a state of mood. It was done when he forgot about his body and when his soul was dominant." Quoting Muhaddith Dihlawi, according to whom "he who does not believe that [Rasulallah was taken from Mecca to Masjidi Aqsa] becomes an unbeliever," Isik states that Hamidullah might even be a [299 NOTES TO PAGES 162-68] "Batini or Ismaili," "for the Batinis believe in spiritual *mi'raj* and this word of theirs is *kufr* and deviation."

13. Ahmad Khan, *Maqalat-i Sir Sayyid*, 13:593-804: "Waqi'a-i mi'raj ki Haqiqat u asliyyat" (The Truth and Origin of the *mi'raj*). See also *ibid.*, 11:711-65, his remarks against the acceptance of a bodily ascension, which culminate in the sentence: "We Muslims do not want to make our Prophet 'God's son,' and we are not desirous to make him 'sit at God's right hand.' "
14. Archer, *Mystical Elements in Mohammad*, p. 50. His entire chapter about the heavenly journey deserves careful study.
15. For the interpretation of "him" in Sura 53:13 by. Sahl at-Tustari see Deladriere, *La Profession de Foi d'Ibn 'Arabi*, p. 124.
16. See Andrae, *Die person Muhammad, peace be upon him,s*, pp. 80-81, citing Qastallani's *Al-mawahib al-laduniyya*, 6: 137.
17. Rumi, *Diwan*, no. 1758.
18. Sana'i, *Diwan*, p. 376.
19. Ikram, *Armaghan-i Pak*, p. 158.
20. Hujwiri, *Kashf al-mahjub*, trans. Nicholson, p. 186: "Our apostle was sober; he beheld the same glory continuously, with ever increasing consciousness, all the way from Mecca, until he stood at the space of two bows' length from the divine presence."
21. J. N. Bell, *Love Theories in Later Hanbalite Islam*, p. 176.
22. Andrae, *Die person Muhammad*, p. 70, citing Tabari, *Tafsir*, 32:26.
23. For this whole problem see Ritter, *Das Meer der Seele*, pp. 445 ff.
24. Arberry, *Discourses of Rumi*, pp. 211, 78.
25. Iqbal, *Six Lectures*, p. 124.
26. Ibn al-Farid, *Ta'yya*, line 454, in Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, P-239.

27. Qushairi, "Bab al- 'ubudiyya," in *Risala*, p. 92.
28. Andrae, *Die person Muhammad*, s, p. 84.
29. B. A. Hashmi, "Sarmad," *Islamic Culture* 7 (1933): 670.
30. Andrae, *Die person Muhammads*, p. 83, citing Qastallani, *Al-mawahib alladuniyya*, 6:10.
31. Thus *Tuhfa-i Rahimm Yar*, pp. 7-8; the *munkir-i mi'raj*, "the denier of the heavenly journey," is often attacked in Sindhi and Pashto verse too.
32. 'Attar, *Ilahinama*, pp. 14-19.
33. In Rumi's version of this story, it is seventy thousand mysteries (thus Aflaki, *Maniqib al- 'irifin*, p. 599, chap. 3, para. 589). The Prophet also recited the Koran seventy times in the Divine Presence, *ibid.*, p. 490, chap. 3, para. 474.
34. Furuzanfar, *A!Jiidfth-i Mathnawf*, nos. 26,445.
35. Ghanizade, in Kopruluzade, *Eski Sairlerimiz*, p. 356. Cf. also Thabit's *Mi'rajiyye*, in E. J. W. Gibb, *History of Ottoman Poetry*, 4:22-23.
36. Usually it is said that Gabriel resembled the handsome Meccan Dihya alKalbi. Paret, *Die legendiire Maghazf-Literatur*, p. 175, shows that in later legends Gabriel appears generally as a messenger to the Prophet, not so much in his heavenly glory. This remark is corroborated by the manner in which the mighty angel is [page 300] [NOTES TO PAGES 168-7 I] depicted in popular poetry, where he clearly appears to be subordinate to the Prophet (see chapter 10 n. 83).
37. Yunus Emre, *Divan*, p. 303, no. CLIX.
38. Furuzanfar, *Ahadith-i Mathnawi*, no. 100.
39. Furuzanfar, *Ahadlth-i Mathnawi*, no. 48.
40. Arberry, *Discourses of Rumi*, p. 24. See Schimmel, *The Triumphal Sun*, pp. 352-66.
41. 41. Rumi, *Mathnawi*, vol. 4, lines 3755 ff., esp. 3805; and vol. I, line 1066:
Intellect says, like Gabriel, "O Ahmad!
If I should advance one step, ~~He will burn me.~~ (I will be burnt.)
42. Longworth Dames, *Popular Poetry of the Baloches*, 1:158. This idea also occurs in a Panjabi poem in honor of Pir Piran 'Abdul Qadir, the "wonderful flower in the Prophet's garden" on "whose neck the Prophet put his foot." I read this in a manuscript (ca. late nineteenth-century) in the possession of Syed Zulfiqar Ali Bokhari,

- Jhang.
43. Aflaki, *Mana'iq al-arifin*, p. 365, chap. 3, para. 299.
 44. Nizami, "Makhzan al-asrar," in *Kulliyat-i Khamsa*, pp. 17-20; "Laila Majnun," *ibid.*, pp. 433-36; "Haft Paikar," *ibid.*, p. 606.
 45. Jami, "Yusuf u Zulaikha," in *Haft Aurang*, pp. 584-85; cf. "Silsilat adhdhahab," *ibid.*, p. 10.
 46. Molla Nusrati (d. 1684), the court poet of 'Adilshah of Bijapur and his successors, wrote a *mi'rajnama*, and so did Sayyid Bulaqi in the Deccan in 1694. See Syed Naimuddin, "Sayyid Bulaqi's Mirajnama," with some examples.
 47. Jami; *Diwan*, p. 289, no. 307; cf. Naziri, *Diwan*, p. 47, *qasida* no. 32.
 The sky "used the dust of the Prophet's road [path] as antimony for its eyes and became radiant."
 Antimony not only embellishes the eyes but also enhances the sight; but the term *chashm raushan*, "may your eye brightened" also means "Congratulations!" That means, the skies, which used the dust of the Prophet's road [path] for their eyes, are to be congratulated that they were blessed by the touch of his feet. This idea occurs frequently in later Persian and Turkish poetry.
 48. Ghanizade, in Kopruluzade, *Eski Sairlerimiz*, pp. 353-57.
 49. The *rafrafas* the last vehicle for the Prophet appears in Nizami's *mi'raj* poems and, following his example, also in the chapter on *mi'raj* in Suleyman Chelebi's *mevlut*. Similarly, Naziri sings in his *na't* (*Diwan*, p. 486): His high ambition, *himmat*, put the foot from the skies on a *rafraf*.
 50. Buraq-sometimes, as in Bulaqi's *Mi'rajnama*, called *Barraq*, "very radiant, lightning-like"-- is sometimes confused by folk poets with 'Ali's famous white mule Duldul; see Darmesteter, *Chants populaires des Afghans*, no. 110, stanza 10. For a medieval Jewish distortion of the *mi'raj* legend in connection with Buraq see Altmann, "The Ladder of Ascension."
 51. First published by Pavet de Courteille in 1882 as *Miradj-name*; the facsimile edition by Seguy, *The Miraculous Journey of Mahomet*, contains excellent reproductions, although the text is not fully satisfying. For the topic see Ettinghausen, "Persian Ascension Miniatures of the Fourteenth Century."
 52. Baloch, *Maulud*, p. 334.



53. S. C. Welch, *Wonders of the Age*, plate 63. A good postcard of this miniature is available in the British Museum.

54. Now and then, in popular paintings, one sees the Prophet mounting Gabriel, not Buraq.

55. Yunus Ernre, *Divan*, p. 575, no. CCLIV.

56. Sarraj, *Kitab al-luma'*, pp. 382-87; 'Attar, *Tadhkirat al-auliya'*, 1:172-76; see Nicholson, "An Early Arabic Version of the *mi'raj* of Abu Yazid al-Bistami"; and Ritter, "Die Ausspruche des Bayezid Bistami."

57. Aflaki, *Manaqib al-'arifin*, p. 666, chap. 4, para. 67.

58. See Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*; Meier, "Der Geistmensch bei dem persischen Dichter 'Attar"; Ibn 'Arabi deals with the mystical *mi'raj* in his book *Kitab al-isra'ila maqam al-asra'*, analyzed by Azma, "Some Notes on the Impact of the Story of the *mi'raj*."

59. Golpinarli, *Tasavvufun dilimize gecen deyimler*, p. 235.

60. Buraq as an equivalent of Love occurs in Rumi's work in the following places:

Diwan, nos. 3, 288, 1313, 1426, 1595, 1741, 1997; in *Mathnawi*, vol. 5, line 4133, the gallows on which the lovers are killed is compared to Buraq because death leads the lover into the Divine presence. Folk poetry liked the rhyme *Hallaj-mi'raj*, for Hallaj performed his "ascension" while on the gallows.

61. Rumi, *Diwan*, nos. 1295, 1296; see Schimmel, *The Triumphal Sun*, pp. 289-90, for more examples of the "ladder."

62. Asin PalaCios, *Islam and the Divine Comedy*.

63. Cerulli, *Il "Libro della Scala" e la questione delle fonte arabo-spagnole della "Divina Commedia."*

64. Nicholson, "The 'Risalat al-Ghufran' by Abu'l-'Aala' al-Ma'arri."

65. Brockelmann, *GAL*, S3:487, first published in 1931 in the magazine *adDuhur*.

66. Iqbal, *Javidnama*; trans. in English (Arberry; Ahmad),

French (Meyerovitch), German (Schimmel), Italian (Bausani), Turkish (Schimmel). For Iqbal's use of the imagery of the *mi'rij* see Schimmel, *Gabriel's Wing*, pp. 301-6.

67. He may have thought of Iqbal's verse (*Bal-i Jibril*, p. 44):

I have learned this lesson from Mustafa's *mi'raj*,
That the heaven is in the grasp of the world of humanity.

** **

AND MUHAMMAD
IS HIS MESSENGER

The Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic Piety

Annemarie Schimmel,

Islamic Book Trust Kuala Lumpur, 1985 (pages 159-175, endnotes: 297-301)

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